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Integration of the human rights of women and the gender perspective: violence against women

Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women, which was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995.

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Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on its activities to eliminate violence against women

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly requested the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to take into account the need, within its mandate, to strengthen its activities to eliminate violence against women in order to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Beijing Declaration[1] and Platform for Action.[2] In so doing, UNIFEM works closely with the relevant agencies and bodies of the United Nations system as part of its system-wide efforts to eliminate violence against women.

2. Under the guidance of General Assembly resolution 50/166, the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was established in 1996 and became operational in 1997, with UNIFEM as the Trust Fund's administrator. In that resolution, the Assembly positioned the Fund as a key mechanism for the advancement of the measures on gender-based violence set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Since its inception, the Trust Fund has continued to identify and support innovative and catalytic projects around the world that aim to break new ground, create new models and mobilize new constituencies in the growing movement to eliminate gender-based violence in all of its manifestations.

3. The present report to the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the sixty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights documents the activities undertaken by UNIFEM in 2004 to eliminate violence against women.

4. Through the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, UNIFEM links innovative efforts to end violence against women with opportunities to replicate and scale up successful strategies. The Trust Fund generates lessons and good practices that inform larger programmes of UNIFEM and its civil society, governmental and United Nations partners at the national, regional and global levels.

5. Since the Trust Fund began operation, it has awarded $8.3 million in grants to 175 initiatives in 96 countries. Over the past several years, the Trust Fund has experienced a dramatic increase in grant applications, which reflects the Trust Fund's unique character as a funding mecha[illegible]sm in a global context in which gender-based violence continues to be a chroni[illegible]eat [illegible]omen's lives and well-being, as well as to the dynamism of the constituency that has responded with national-level initiatives to the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and the five-year review of its implementation.

6. The importance of enhancing efforts to finance the Trust Fund is certainly underlined by the convening of the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Trust Fund has played a significant role in the changes that have been accomplished over the past decade. However, the continued and expanding disjuncture between the resources available through the Trust Fund and the requests for support to new initiatives speaks to a potential that could be realized much more fully.

I. Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women: 2004 grant making cycle

7. In October 2004, the ninth grant making cycle of the Trust Fund provided US$ 900,000 to 17 initiatives in 21 countries. As in previous years, demand for Trust Fund support far exceeded its resources, and the Trust Fund was able to fund only a fraction of the grant requests received.

8. Following the recommendations of the Consultative Committee for UNIFEM to undertake an expanded interpretation of gender-based violence in the focus and operation of the Trust Fund, and recommendations of the Trust Fund's Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee for UNIFEM to consider calls for proposals concentrating on specific thematic interlinkages with gender-based violence, grant making in 2004 solicited proposals focusing on strategies to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings.

9. Proposals were submitted for final review to the Trust Fund's Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee, which is a coordinated mechanism designed to allow the members of the United Nations system as a whole to meet together, along with members of women's civil society organizations, to determine grant allocations and the Trust Fund's long-term planning. Members of the 2004 Appraisal Committee included representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat, the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and a number of non-governmental organizations. The following 17 initiatives will be undertaken through proposals approved in the Trust Fund's ninth cycle:

- In Nigeria, the violations suffered by women in conflict zones will be addressed by bringing greater public attention to this issue and helping to create a consensus within conflict communities for the rejection of gender-based violence.
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, men and community leaders will be assisted in addressing attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual violence and women's rights, developing collective local strategies, and strengthening community structures for improved responses.
- In the southern Sudan, capacity will be built to document the impact of armed conflict on women, and these research results will be provided to policy makers and civil society organizations to assist in post-conflict reconstruction.
- In Darfur, an initiative will be undertaken to increase the understanding of gender-based violence among media personnel, and, through media campaigns, to increase awareness on the part of policy makers, law enforcement officials and communities of the need to address gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

- In Rwanda, an initiative will improve former female soldiers' understanding of the consequences of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS for reproductive health, and contribute to the safe reintegration of former female soldiers into their communities.

- In the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, awareness will be raised about the ethical duties of the health-care profession to address gender-based violence, and medical practitioners and health-care workers will be supported in developing a code of ethics for the provision of assistance to survivors of violence.

- In Nepal, radio and community discussion groups will be used to create the space for women to speak out against violence, both personal and communal, and to bring women together to effect change in their local settings.

- In Indonesia, support will be provided to a broad-based government and civil society partnership for the development of a draft law to guide the integration of services for women survivors of violence at the provincial level.

- In Fiji, an initiative will be undertaken to challenge attitudes and behaviour of young men regarding violence against women, provide young men with alternative methods of resolving conflict in their homes and communities, and empower women to take a central role in their communities' peacebuilding processes.

- In Georgia, a gender-based violence training programme for government officials in post-conflict regions will be expanded, with special emphasis on the recent conflict zones. In addition, the programme will be replicated in Azerbaijan.

- In Serbia and Montenegro, a women's network will be strengthened in its work on reconciliation and against gender-based violence across ethnic, religious and political affiliations. The initiative will also advocate for and facilitate greater application of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in peacebuilding efforts in the region.

- In Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, research and investigation into the escalation of gender-based violence and femicide will be used to identify areas in which legislation and public policies are in need of revision, and to encourage greater collective action to end impunity.

- In Haiti, support will be provided to develop the institutional capacity of women's groups at the local level to assist survivors of gender-based violence in obtaining redress, and these groups will also be supported in their efforts to create an integrated plan to combat violence against women.

- In Guyana, support will be provided to an initiative to bring greater attention to the role played by gender-based violence in ethnic conflict, and to empower women and girls in affected communities to pursue justice and equality.

- In Peru, support will be provided to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission relating to gender-based violence, which include the creation of an integrated plan to provide reparations to victims, the establishment of an interim system to

process human rights violations, and the creation of a training programme for judges.

- In Colombia, the model of the Municipality of Cordoba's Peace and Coexistence Committee — in which the local government and a broad range of social organizations joined together to design policies that advance peace and coexistence from a gender perspective — will be replicated in three other municipalities in the province of Quindío.

- In Brazil, a Trust Fund project will promote the positive use of hip hop music among youth to raise awareness about gender-based violence and encourage non-violent conflict resolution among young women and men.

10. It should also be mentioned that during 2004 there was continuing recognition of the effectiveness of Trust Fund-supported projects. The support provided in 2002 by the Trust Fund facilitated the efforts of the Human Rights Commission (COMISEDH) to incorporate a gender perspective in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru, including advocacy for reparations for women victims of violence in the country. The project was recognized in 2004 as one of three best projects on human rights in the country, receiving an award from Oxfam, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and CARE. Also in 2002, the Trust Fund provided a grant in support of research and documentation of the stories of women living with HIV/AIDS following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The findings of this research are currently being utilized by the National AIDS Commission of Rwanda, the Peace and Security Directorate of the African Union, and the Embassy of the United States of America in Rwanda.

II. Expanding the Trust Fund's reach and impact: replication and upscaling of Trust Fund initiatives

11. Responding to recommendations made by the Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee that a revised strategy should be developed for grant making, UNIFEM presented a revised Trust Fund strategy for the period 2005-2008 to the Committee for its consideration. The revised strategy, endorsed by the Committee in October 2004, encompasses specific aspects of the Trust Fund — inter alia, in the areas of impact, involvement, knowledge, efficiency and resources — that UNIFEM has identified as being in need of strengthening based on the experience derived from the Trust Fund's past eight years of operation.

12. Of particular note is the fact that under the revised strategy, Trust Fund grant making will focus on securing and supporting the vast array of laws and policies that have been created in all regions of the world to address the multiple forms of violence faced by women. One of the primary findings of the reviews undertaken by UNIFEM in 2002-2003 of the Trust Fund and other initiatives around the world, as summarized in the publication *Not a Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women*[3] — and also confirmed by the 2003 cumulative report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women (E/CN.4/2004/66 and Add.1 and 2) — is that, while there has been great progress in developing new laws and policies, their implementation remains weak, their enforcement has been uneven, and the laws and policies themselves are often not properly framed to protect

women's human rights. During the period 2005-2008, the Trust Fund will place special emphasis on providing support to governmental and non-governmental organizations in building awareness of new laws and policies, repairing deficiencies in light of human rights requirements, identifying necessary budgetary allocations for implementation, increasing the capacity of judiciaries, law enforcement and health workers to put laws into effect, and creating data-collection systems and indicators to assist in monitoring their effectiveness.

13. Reports submitted by grantees from previous grant making cycles demonstrate that the initial catalytic support received from the Trust Fund continues to yield long-term results. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Trust Fund provided support for strengthening capacities of members of the Lao Women's Union to run a centre in Vientiane for survivors of gender-based violence. In 2002, when the Women's Union had requested support from the Trust Fund, violence faced by women went largely unreported and there were no reliable statistics on sexual assault or domestic violence. Existing laws in the Lao People's Democratic Republic did not address specific issues surrounding gender-based violence. Following the set-up and operation of the centre, the Women's Union was able to document a large number of cases and present these to the Government. The success of the programme is evidenced by the Government's invitation to the Women's Union to present a bill on domestic violence, which was passed by the Laotian National Assembly in October 2004 and is awaiting its signature into law by Parliament. The Women's Union was successful in leveraging additional support from the Asia Foundation to pay for technical expertise in the drafting of the law, from the Trust Fund in 2003 to hold public hearings to raise awareness on the draft law and involve women in the legislative process, and from the Japanese Embassy in the Lao People's Democratic Republic to build a permanent crisis centre in Vientiane.

14. In Africa, Trust Fund support to the work of the African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) with organizations of men committed to gender equality has resulted in the creation of a men's network to combat violence against women and promote gender equality in Africa. The Men for Gender Equality Now Network organized a Men's Travelling Conference through Ethiopia, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia, sensitizing thousands of men on issues of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. FEMNET has enhanced its support from the Trust Fund by attracting additional funding from the Heinrich Böll Foundation and UNHCR. The work of FEMNET with men's groups for gender equality was recognized by the Commission on the Status of Women at its 2004 session, where the organization was invited to participate in a preparatory expert group discussion and serve as a panellist.

15. In Mexico, the Trust Fund supported Semillas (Sociedad Mexicana Pro Derechos de la Mujer) and the Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos in addressing concerns over impunity with regard to femicides in Ciudad Juarez. For the first time, organizations representing families of victims have joined together with human rights non-governmental organizations in a common effort to underline to the Government the need for urgent and appropriate action. The Mexican Government is now providing funds to affected communities where there have been the most dramatic incidents of femicide, in order to start crèches, offer counselling on mental and emotional health, and support microenterprises through which women can market their products.

16. Trust Fund support to the All China Women's Federation has resulted in an expansion of complaint stations for domestic violence, from the Trust Fund project pilot areas in Liaoning province to other locations within the province; moreover, the work initiated in Liaoning has been replicated in Shaanxi and Jiangxi provinces. Women's federations at different levels have submitted legislative proposals on addressing domestic violence to the local people's congress and have released joint statements on formulating local policies on prevention of, and response to, domestic violence. Local policies and regulations have been produced in several provinces, prefectures and counties. Law enforcement officials and citizenry have come together to establish complaint centres for domestic violence, and 13 provinces have established shelters. In Jiangxi and Wuhan, training and awareness-raising activities directed at men are gaining momentum.

17. During 2004, UNIFEM also built upon the lessons learned from the Trust Fund by providing its own support to a number of larger-scale initiatives directed towards legislative reform, improved collection of data and statistics, anti-trafficking, health care, police responses, awareness-raising through media, and post-conflict reconstruction. Technical and financial support was provided to facilitate the passage and amendment of laws relating to domestic violence in the Philippines, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and in Zimbabwe and Fiji, support has been provided for the review of cases of existing domestic violence so that needed reforms can be identified. The collection of data and statistics regarding incidents of violence against women has been improved, with UNIFEM support, in Thailand, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Egypt, Mexico and Saint Lucia. UNIFEM-supported models for special cells for women and girls in police stations have been replicated across the Indian State of Rajasthan, and support to a hospital-based one-stop crisis centre has led to its mainstreaming in the policy of Thailand's Ministry of Public Health. Support to the Law Reform Commission in Sierra Leone is enabling a comprehensive review of the country's laws in relation to violence against women, and women's organizations are also being supported to help ensure the effective implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations on gender-based violence. UNIFEM support to anti-trafficking initiatives in the South Asia region has made possible a review of anti-trafficking laws aimed at identifying gender-discriminatory provisions in four countries, and support to India's National Human Rights Commission for the collection of sex-disaggregated data has made it possible to map the profiles of victims, traffickers and customers for the first time.

III. Conclusion

18. It has been 10 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and 9 years since the creation of the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, and much more is now known about effective strategies to eliminate gender-based violence; building on this, the challenges that lie ahead can be identified.

19. Great strides have been made in setting normative standards and legal frameworks, and the current challenge is to identify effective means to ensure the proper implementation and replication of good laws, and to bring deficient laws into greater conformity with human rights standards. Improved mechanisms must be developed for enforcing rights and redressing violations in order to achieve

accountability and justice. Legislative reform must be accompanied by training and reform of criminal justice systems, as so many continue to be insensitive to the needs of women victims. Some of the changes that have been made in the administration of justice — through the creation of specialized police stations, the training of the police force as a whole, and partnerships with women's non-governmental organizations — must be instituted more broadly. Violence against women must be urgently addressed in the context of HIV/AIDS, as it is one of the principal factors fuelling the pandemic. Coordinated community-level interventions must be initiated to bring together men, local government, traditional leaders, medical and legal professionals, and the leaders of women's organizations, so that the framework of international and national laws can be firmly connected to women's lived realities. We also know that ways must be found to deal with violence at multiple levels and in multiple sectors of society simultaneously, and that the root causes of violence must be addressed, including women's poor economic, social and political status.

20. Initiatives supported through the Trust Fund have made important contributions to the development of greatly increased expertise on effective strategies to eliminate violence against women in all of these areas. However, as the international community looks forward, in the context of the 10-year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action and beyond, there is an urgent need for significantly greater funding to allow Trust Fund support for innovation, upscaling, and implementation of the new strategies that have been created to continue and flourish. Furthermore, the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[4] reaffirming the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women, has committed Governments around the world to combating all forms of violence against women, and has recognized the advancement of gender equality as central to all progress in achieving the Millennium Declaration's vision for the twenty-first century. The Trust Fund has a critical role to play in this endeavour. As the Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (United Nations Millennium Project 2005) has recently observed in its interim report entitled *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*:[5]

> "Although the global community has rallied to address other epidemics (such as HIV and tuberculosis), it continues to fail to respond in the same way to the epidemic of violence against women. For instance, while General Assembly resolution 50/166 established a Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women at UNIFEM, country needs and requests far outstrip the Fund's current resources ... Given its visibility and track record, the Trust Fund could serve as an important mechanism for a strong global response (chap. 9)".

It is time for the serious commitment of resources that will achieve a world free of violence against women.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] New York, UNIFEM, 2003.

[4] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[5] London, and Sterling, Virginia, Earthscan, 2005, for the United Nations Development Programme.